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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8357
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2181
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 3725
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4825
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1669
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1674
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 2500
RUEHPT/AMCONSUL PERTH 0637
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

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SUBJECT: INDONESIA -- REACTION TO THE 2007 HUMAN RIGHTS
REPORT

REF: JAKARTA 504 AND PREVIOUS

11. (U) SUMMARY: The Indonesian media has reacted in straightforward fashion to the 2007 Country Report on Human Rights Practices. Government officials and activists expressed general agreement with the Indonesia chapter of the report, commenting that while Indonesia has made progress, it still has a way to go to improve human rights practices. One area of improvement appeared on the horizon this week when the Attorney General's office announced it would take action to investigate the 1998-99 killing of students in Jakarta.
END SUMMARY.

MEDIA REPORTS IN STRAIGHTFORWARD FASHION

12. (U) At least four national news outlets carried articles on the 2007 Country Report on Human Rights Practices following its March 11 dissemination. National Bahasa Indonesia newspaper Seputar Indonesia highlighted positive elements of the report, noting the U.S. assessment of the Indonesian government's seriousness in its efforts to prosecute the murder of human rights activist Munir Said Thalib, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's signing of an anti-trafficking law, and the improvement in the performance of the Indonesian National Police, especially in handling demonstrations without using violence. Straightforward, non-critical articles were also carried by Media Indonesia, Rakyat Merdeka and the Jakarta Post (the major English language newspaper in the country).

POSITIVE VIBES FROM CONTACTS

13. (U) Government officials and civil society activists reacted positively to the report. Deputy Commissioner Ridha Saleh, of the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM), told the media that Komnas HAM's year-end report had reached similar conclusions to our report. Wiwiek Setyawati Firman, Director of Human Rights at the Department of Foreign Affairs, said in comments to the press: "in general, we realize we're not perfect yet" but "we're going in that direction." She noted Indonesia's ratification of U.N. conventions and compliance with mandated reporting requirements.

14. (U) Human rights activists expressed similar sentiments

to poloff. They noted that while human rights conditions are not as grave as they were in the Suharto-era, there is still a way to go toward accountability and improving legal protections for citizens.

A STEP TOWARD ACCOUNTABILITY

15. (U) In the meantime, the government is taking action on three high-profile cases highlighted in this year's report: the cases of 1998 and 1999 in which a total of 18 students were killed during demonstrations. Attorney General Hendarman Supanji publicly announced that he was working with Komnas HAM to investigate the shootings, widely known as "Trisakti and Semanggi I and II" after the Jakarta locations where the incidents occurred. When pressed for the cases' status, he told the media that his office was working to make sure that the evidence that has been gathered would fulfill the legal requirements of court cases.

HUME